

Averell Harriman, John Deane, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the 'Reversal of Co-operation' with the Soviet Union in April 1945

BEGINNING IN MARCH and culminating in late April 1945, a political battle was fought in the highest echelons of the government of the United States, the objective of which was to overturn the wartime policy of co-operation with the Soviet Union. As long as Franklin D. Roosevelt remained president, the attempt failed; but in the aftermath of his death, it was successful. Two of the key figures in the battle to change Roosevelt's policy were the diplomatic and military heads of the United States embassy in Moscow – the ambassador to the Soviet Union, W. Averell Harriman, and the commanding general of the United States military mission, Major-General John Deane. The third was the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The opportunity for the campaign came in March when Roosevelt was clearly irritated by Joseph Stalin's accusations that talks being held between the Germans and the British and Americans at Berne might lead to a German surrender on the Italian front. Taking advantage of the aggressive Soviet posture over the negotiations at Berne, Harriman, at the beginning of April, barraged Washington with telegrams which laid out his view of the Soviet threat and, along with Deane, called for a 'reversal' of the policy of co-operation with the Soviet Union.

The weapons used in the campaign were military aid to the Soviets, the future government of Poland, and the United Nations. Should the United States tie its military aid to good performance? Had the United States at Yalta been willing to allow the Soviets to control the new Polish government in disregard of the democratic principle? And, if they had been, would they enforce the principle as a way to

limit the westward expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence in Europe? If the Soviets retaliated by backing away from the United Nations, should the United States risk a general crisis in Allied relations by setting up the organization without them? Between February and April 1945, the answers to all these questions changed from No to Yes.

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On 2 April, Deane called upon Washington (as summarized in a document known as JCS 1301/1) to cancel the latest Lend-Lease convoy being formed to carry supplies to Northern Russia, because of several instances of Soviet non-co-operation. On 3 April, Harriman, endorsing Deane's call for drastic retaliation, sent an urgent cable to Roosevelt, which was turned over to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to the secretary of state, Edward R. Stettinius:

Aside from the major questions which are causing concern in our relations with the Soviet Union, there has been an accumulation of minor incidents which started some six weeks ago. I feel certain that unless we do take action in cases of this kind the Soviet government will become convinced that they can force us to accept any of their decisions on all matters. It [then] will be increasingly difficult to stop their aggressive policy. If we stand firm, I am satisfied it is the only way we can hope to come to a reasonable basis of give and take with these people. It is my firm belief that if we adopt firm measures in several cases such as those Dean[e] has proposed, the Soviets will pay more attention to our requests in other matters of a more fundamental nature such as those that may arise at the San Francisco conference. If we delay adoption of this policy, I am convinced that we will have greater difficulties as time goes on. I am convinced, however, that whatever we do will not affect their major determination to go all out in the defeat of Germany nor what they may do in the Far East.¹

The next day, while awaiting a response from Washington, Harriman sent a telegram to Stettinius stating that the Soviet Union 'views all matters from the standpoint of their own selfish interests ... the Soviet programme [of] totalitarianism [will end] personal liberty and democracy as we know and respect it'. The United States, therefore, 'must adopt a more positive policy of using our economic influence to further our broad political ideals', in order to prevent the creation of 'a world dominated largely by Soviet influence.

¹ 'Personal and Top Secret from Harriman to the President', 3 April 1945, U[niversity] P[ublications of] A[merica], M[ap] R[oom] M[essages of President Roosevelt (1939-45), 9 reels], reel 8, box 11, 0815-18.

Cooperation should be on a "*quid pro quo*" basis.²

The first responses in Washington to Harriman's and Deane's proposals emerged from the President's Soviet Protocol Committee on 3 April and the Joint Chiefs of Staff two days later. The committee, in JCS 1301/1, recommended the continuation of present policy; rebuked Deane for proposing to cancel the convoy, which would constitute 'a major departure from established policy'; and restated the 'established' policy verbatim. Quoting the statement Roosevelt had issued two years in a row, the committee 'urgently' recommended Deane to abide by it: 'Russia continues to be a major factor in achieving the defeat of Germany. We must therefore continue to support the USSR by providing the maximum amount of supplies which can be delivered to her ports. This is a matter of paramount importance.'³ Co-operation with the Soviet Union remained established US policy.

The Joint Chiefs considered the call for a change in policy towards the Soviets 'a matter of priority'. On 3 April, JCS 1301 stated that Harriman and Deane had 'recommended actions which they consider should be adopted in an effort to obtain Russian co-operation'. Repeating Harriman and Deane's phrases, the Joint Chiefs characterized the actions recommended as 'retaliatory in nature' which admittedly 'might provoke adverse Soviet reaction', but 'on the other hand, action of this nature might bring to a stop undesirable trend which has developed'.⁴ They then forwarded JCS 1301 and 1301/1 to

² Harriman to Stettinius, 4 April 1945, *F[oreign] R[elations of the] U[nited] S[tates]*, v. 817-20.

³ 'Cancellation of Convoy to North Russia', 3 April 1945, JCS 1301/1, in a microfilm series of UPA [Records of the] J[oint] C[hiefs of] S[taff], part I, USSR, reel 1, 0165-71. Appendices A and B contain Roosevelt's signed policy directives from 14 Feb. 1944 to 6 Jan. 1945. The last sentence, reiterated in JCS 1301/1, is stated precisely as it appeared in Roosevelt's 1944 policy statement cited. In Jan. 1945, however, Roosevelt had changed one word, so that the sentence read 'I consider this a matter of utmost [rather than paramount] importance', and added that the reason for the change was to make this 'second only to the operational requirements in the Pacific and the Atlantic', reflecting the changed situation of the United States after D-Day. [Compare appendix A with B, frames 0166, 0170, and 0171]. The president's future intentions were spelled out, quoting the same wording in the 6 Jan. version: 'the President's directive with reference to the Fifth Soviet Protocol', which would run from 1 July 1945 to 30 June 1946, placed prime importance on aiding the Soviet Union. Roosevelt had explicitly stated: 'Pending the formulation of the Fifth Protocol, it is my desire that every effort be made to continue a full and uninterrupted flow of supplies to the USSR.' Hence no action should be taken as Deane requested 'unless approved by Mr Hopkins or the President': JCS 1301/1, JCS, part I, USSR, reel 1, 0166, 0167, 0169.

⁴ 'Arrangements with the Soviets', 3 April, JCS 1301, JCS, part I, USSR, reel 1, 0160-4. See also John R. Deane, *The Strange Alliance: The Story of Our Efforts at Wartime Co-operation with Russia* (New York, 1947), pp. 253-4 and W. Averell Harriman and Elie Able, *Special Envoy to Churchill*

the Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC), a key strategic planning and policy formulating body for the Joint Chiefs. The JSSC responded on the 5th in JCS 1301/2, and its recommendations, adopted as policy, stated: 'The maintenance of the unity of the Allies in the prosecution of the war must remain the cardinal and overriding objective of our politico-military policy with Russia.' Equally significant was the low priority given to incidents Harriman and Deane considered crucial: 'The incidents of Russian refusal to co-operate cited in JCS 1301, while irritating and difficult to understand if considered as isolated events, are of relatively *minor moment*'.

The Joint Chiefs also argued that a dangerous dynamic might be set in motion if the Harriman-Deane policy were adopted: 'Retaliatory acts on our part would not accomplish the end desired but would increase suspicion and ill-feeling and might well provoke further Russian measures leading finally to a break in Allied unity.' They recommended 'that no retaliatory steps should be undertaken', and cautioned against making too many demands of the Soviets: 'we may be pressing the Russians for agreement on many points which, while desirable from our military point of view, are not of sufficient importance to warrant our insisting upon them' especially when they are 'in opposition to what is thought to be basic Russian political policy'.⁵

The Joint Chiefs thought these issues 'may be the reflection of the very grave misunderstanding that has arisen in the political field as a result of the recent negotiations in Berne', suggesting, as Roosevelt had cabled Stalin several days earlier,⁶ that the negotiations were a German ploy to separate the Allies. 'This misunderstanding is of such gravity that no efforts should be spared to ensure its early removal.' They even recommended that the administration should invite 'high Soviet military officials to visit the Western Front' where they could

and *Stalin, 1941-1946* (New York, 1975), pp. 422-3. A study of the JSSC, called 'at times equal in influence' to the JCS, can be found in Mark A. Stoler, 'From Continentalism to Globalism: General Stanley D. Embick, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, and the Military View of American National Policy during the Second World War', *Diplomatic History*, vi (1982), 303-21, 308.

⁵ 'Arrangements with the Soviets', 5 April 1945, JCS 1301/2, JCS, part I, USSR, reel 1, 0172-4.

⁶ Received in Moscow 1 April, it stated that the 'entire episode' arose because of a German officer 'close to Himmler and there is, of course, a strong possibility that his sole purpose is to create suspicion and distrust between the Allies': Roosevelt to Stalin, *Stalin's Correspondence with Roosevelt and Truman, 1941-1945* (New York, 1963), p. 205: emphasis added.

learn first hand of Anglo-American 'good faith' and thereby 'satisfy themselves'.⁷

As the US government resolutely confirmed on 5 April its policy of co-operation with the Soviet Union, the Soviets denounced their neutrality pact with Japan of 13 April 1941 and, as they had agreed in February at Yalta, prepared to enter the war in Asia. Stettinius therefore cabled Harriman: 'In view of recent developments it would be helpful for the President and myself to receive an overall survey of our relations with the Soviet Union with any comments and views you may care to submit.' Harriman, awaiting news of the fate of his and Deane's recommendations of a new 'retaliatory' policy, delayed his reply. When he had almost certainly learned that the change was rejected, he replied to Stettinius on the 6th refusing the request for 'an overall survey' and stating that 'a satisfactory report could only be given if I were directed to return to Washington'.⁸ Nevertheless, he argued his case for a policy reversal in what he called an 'outline' of 'limited value' meant as an interim statement preceding a personal consultation. It was, in fact, a refutation of the Joint Chiefs' policy just affirmed by Washington, but without direct reference to it. By carefully avoiding the use of the offending word 'retaliation' and by portraying Soviet policy as 'retaliatory', Harriman tried to justify his new policy as a form of co-operation:

Whenever the United States does anything to which the Soviet take exception they do not hesitate to take retaliatory measures. It now seems that they feel they can force us to acquiesce in their policies. Since we are resisting, they are using the usual Soviet tactics of *retaliating* in ways that they think will have the most effect, one of which is the decision not to send [the Soviet foreign secretary Vyacheslav] Molotov to the San Francisco conference. I must with regret recommend that we begin in the near future with one or two cases where their actions are intolerable and make them realize that they cannot continue their present attitude except at great cost to themselves.

I am a most earnest advocate of the closest possible understanding with the Soviet Union [but our] generous and considerate attitude towards them in spite of their disregard of our requests for co-operation [they interpret] as a sign of weakness. The time has come when we must by our actions in each

⁷ JCS 1301/2, JCS, part I, USSR, reel 1, 0174.

⁸ The language of Harriman's response on 6 April makes it clear that Harriman had seen the Joint Chiefs' rejection. He cited previous concerns over co-operation as precedent for his return now. See *FRUS*, v. telegram, 821, n. 23 and Harriman to Stettinius, 6 April 1945, *ibid.*, p. 821; Hull to Harriman, 18 Sept. 1944, *FRUS*, iv. 991.

individual case make it plain to the Soviet government that they cannot expect our continued co-operation on terms laid down by them. They [must be] made to understand specifically how lack of co-operation with our legitimate demands will adversely affect their interests. [We must retain] ... a readiness to go along without them if we can't obtain their cooperation ... [since] they intend to go forward with unilateral action.⁹

Although Deane returned to Washington, Harriman's request to present his arguments in person was turned down, on the ground that 'we should await' further developments between Stalin and Roosevelt before any personal consultation.¹⁰ The setback, though, was only temporary: another opportunity to force the issue came within the week, with Roosevelt's death on the 12th.¹¹

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The day before he died, Roosevelt sent a telegram to Stalin confirming that the policy of co-operation still remained the foundation of the Joints Chiefs' strategic planning. In one of the few messages he drafted himself, Roosevelt mentioned the misunderstanding about the negotiations at Berne. These had 'faded into the past without having accomplished any useful purpose ... there must not, in any event, be mutual distrust, and minor misunderstandings of this character should not arise in the future'.

When Harriman received the message in Moscow, he did not transmit it to Stalin but tried to alter it. He was particularly eager to persuade Roosevelt to delete the word 'minor', telling him 'the use of the word "minor" might well be misinterpreted here, since I must confess that the misunderstanding appeared to me to be of a major character'. Roosevelt, however, stuck by what he had written: 'I do not wish to delete the word "minor" as it is my desire to consider the Berne misunderstanding a minor incident.'¹²

Roosevelt's final acts, then, do not seem those of a president

⁹ Harriman to Stettinius, 6 April 1945, *FRUS*, v. 821-4.

¹⁰ See Harriman to Stettinius, 6 April 1945 and Stettinius to Harriman, 7 April 1945, *FRUS*, v. 821, 824-5.

¹¹ In Harriman's memoirs written with Able, there is no reference to the first request and refusal, and only a brief one to the second, singling out Stettinius's decision: Harriman and Able, *Special Envoy*, p. 441.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 439-40. Compare with *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, ed. Warren F. Kimball, iii.629-30, in which the sentence appears 'there must not, in any event, be mutual distrust and minor misunderstandings of this *should arise in the future* [emphasis added] in which the word 'not' is deleted before 'arise'. This is not the case in any of the other records, but it could lead to confusion and perhaps miscomprehension. See *ibid.*, p. 630.

changing his mind about working with the Soviet Union after the war. It is useful, moreover, to set his attitude to the negotiations at Berne in the context of similar problems. Of utmost importance to the president, for example, was the United Nations, over which there were serious difficulties, particularly over the claim of two Soviet republics – Belorussia and Ukraine – to become ‘original members’ and Molotov’s decision not to attend the opening ceremonies at San Francisco on the 25th. Roosevelt did not hesitate about going himself – despite opposition from advisers who feared that the United Nations might not succeed – and insisted upon opening the conference. As he told Steve Early, ‘I’m going to be there at the start and at the finish, too.’¹³

Other divisive issues with the Soviet Union were in various stages of resolution. The most important was the make-up of the Polish government, a matter of graver concern to many around the president than to him. At Yalta Roosevelt agreed to make the Lublin ‘Provisional government which is now functioning in Poland’, and which would ‘be reorganized on a broader democratic basis’, the foundation of an interim government which would hold free elections leading to the formation of a permanent government. He defended this before a joint session of Congress: ‘I am convinced that this agreement on Poland, under the circumstances, is the most hopeful agreement possible for a free, independent, and prosperous Polish State.’¹⁴ Churchill, asking that his remarks be ‘guarded absolutely as between you and me’, told Roosevelt on the 11th: ‘I have a feeling that they [the Soviets] do not want to quarrel with us.’¹⁵ Roosevelt, with only hours to live, replied: ‘I would minimize the general Soviet problem as much as possible because these problems, in one form or another, seem to arise every day and most of them straighten out as in the case of the Berne meeting. We must be firm, however, and our course thus far is correct.’ He approved an Anglo-American message Churchill was to send to the German government about relief in Holland, adding: ‘You may send it as a joint message *provided it is approved by Stalin*.’ Given Stalin’s perception of the Americans and the British excluding the Soviets at Berne, Roosevelt showed his resolve

¹³ Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York, 1950), p. 879.

¹⁴ Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., *Roosevelt and the Russians: The Yalta Conference* (Garden City, 1949), p. 303; Diane Shaver Clemens, *Yalta* (repr. New York, 1978), p. 306.

¹⁵ Churchill to Roosevelt, 11 April 1945, in *Correspondence*, ed. Kimball, p. 628.

to include them and to go out of his way to avoid any suggestion that the western allies were 'ganging up' on them.¹⁶

Perhaps Roosevelt's final word lies in the last speech he wrote but never delivered. In his Jefferson Day speech, he would have told the audience: 'Today we are faced with the pre-eminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships – the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together and work together in the same world, at peace.'¹⁷ Roosevelt held firm to his intention to lead in peace just as he had led in war, and to continue the coalition into the post-war world.

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Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's most intimate associate, cabled Stalin the news of Roosevelt's death from his hospital room in Rochester, New York: 'I want you to know that I feel that Russia has lost her greatest friend in America.' It was not a comforting thought for those who staunchly supported Roosevelt's co-operative policy.¹⁸ On learning of Roosevelt's death, Molotov visited Harriman at 3:00 a.m. 'talking about the part President Roosevelt had played in the war and in the plans for peace', about Stalin's respect for him, and 'how much Marshal Stalin had valued his visit to Yalta'. Harriman replied that Truman would 'carry on Roosevelt's policies'.¹⁹

In a meeting with Harriman later the same day, Stalin broached the subject of continuity or change in US policy towards the Soviet Union and, according to Harriman, stated that 'he did not believe there would be any change in policy'. When Stalin waited for a reply, Harriman reassured him: 'This would be true in so far as the war, foreign policy, and all those other policies where the President had made his plans clear.' But Harriman made a careful adjustment: 'I said that I was satisfied that President Truman would carry out President Roosevelt's plans precisely as *he understood them*'. Harriman, who fully understood Soviet insecurity at this time and how much Truman would depend on his judgement, also saw that Truman could be made

¹⁶ Both messages are Roosevelt to Churchill, 11 April, *ibid.*, pp. 630–1: emphasis added.

¹⁷ Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, pp. 879–80.

¹⁸ Kimball, in his editorial remarks at the end of the Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence, subsequent to the final telegram Roosevelt sent Stalin 12 April, states that 'the President had long ago committed himself to a policy of cooperation after the war': *Correspondence*, p. 630, and the note following this cable.

¹⁹ Harriman and Able, *Special Envoy*, pp. 440, 441 and Harriman to Stettinius, 13 April 1945, in *FRUS*, v. 825–6.

to understand US policy in the way Harriman wanted. 'Truman would not try to interject his own personality', giving the ambassador power to shape events.

Feeding the Soviets' fear of a policy change, Harriman suggested that sending Molotov to the United Nations conference at San Francisco 'would facilitate in stabilizing the situation' and 'reduce the disturbances which had been caused by the death of President Roosevelt'. It would provide 'the most effective signal of assurance Stalin could give that his policy of collaboration with Roosevelt would continue under the untried new President'. Stalin agreed.²⁰ Harriman's next step, on the 14th, was to cable Truman: 'I had a most earnest and intimate talk with Marshal Stalin last night. Although some of our fundamental difficulties with the Soviet government such as Poland did not come up, the conversation was most satisfactory on those matters which we discussed ... In speaking about the Japanese war he [Stalin] stated "Our policy regarding Japan as agreed to at the Crimea Conference remains unchanged."' Harriman managed to brief the president, focus attention on Poland, and make his claim that the United States needed nothing more from the Soviets. Harriman was pleased with his work: 'Before I went over to see Stalin, I had thought hard about what I might ask him to do.'²¹

Harriman's success in persuading Molotov to attend the San Francisco conference confirmed his opinion that the time was ripe for extracting concessions: 'This concession by Stalin again opens the door a crack [and] may mean that the Soviets can be induced to make further concessions.' Stettinius wanted Harriman to ask Stalin and Molotov 'to review' Roosevelt's communication on Poland, giving the Soviets an opportunity to make another friendly gesture, but Harriman felt that he should be in Washington to orchestrate developments 'now that Harry Truman was President'. On 13 April, after consulting Truman, Stettinius turned him down again, but reversed the decision a day later. He cabled Harriman on the 14th that Stalin's decision to send Molotov to San Francisco 'naturally alters the considerations which led to our disapproving your return home at this time. With Molotov coming I feel it would be very desirable and

²⁰ Harriman and Able, *Special Envoy*, pp. 440-1 and 'Memorandum of Conversation, by the Ambassador in the Soviet Union', 13 April 1945, *FRUS*, v. 828-9.

²¹ Harriman to Truman, MRM, reel 1, 0822 and Harriman and Able, *Special Envoy*, pp. 440-1.

appropriate for you to accompany him to Washington.' But *only* 'if Molotov is definitely coming.'²²

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Career diplomats wondered whether the 'little man from Missouri' was actually 'capable of leading the nation at this critical moment in its history'. Within the first two weeks, a positive and enthusiastic answer emerged – the new president 'heeded the views of his foreign policy advisers', particularly those who 'had become more disturbed by Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe, now likened by Harriman to a "barbarian invasion"'. Truman, admitting that he was 'not up on all the details of foreign affairs', relied 'on his secretary of state and his ambassadors to help in this matter'. There was suddenly a new role for them: 'For the first time since Secretary of State [Charles Evans] Hughes sang encomiums to the new "peace diplomats" two decades earlier, an exalted government official had expressed confidence in the foreign service.' As Loy Henderson, the head of the division of near eastern and African affairs put it, at last the president 'was playing the game according to the rules'.²³

Hence a bolder state department stepped forward following Roosevelt's death. The first two messages from Truman to Churchill drafted by the state department had a take-charge tone and, more important, proposed a combined front against Stalin. 'There are, however, urgent problems requiring our immediate and *joint* consideration,' Truman explained, and immediately seized upon the most divisive issue in the coalition, about which Harriman and the state department were determined to have their way: 'I have in mind the pressing and dangerous problem of Poland and the Soviet attitude towards the Moscow negotiations. I feel very strongly that we should have another go at him [Stalin].' Truman also told Churchill that he shared his view 'on the danger of protracted negotiations and obstructionist tactics'.²⁴ Truman took the initiative: 'I suggest for your consideration, therefore, that we send a joint message to Stalin over

²² See MRM, reel 2, p. 2, 0359; Harriman to Stettinius, 14 April 1945, *FRUS*, v. 213 and Harriman to Stettinius, 16 April 1945, v. 224; and Harriman and Able, *Special Envoy*, p. 441.

²³ See Hugh DeSantis, *The Diplomacy of Silence: The American Foreign Service, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War, 1933-1947* (Chicago, 1980), pp. 138-9; Bohlen, 'Memorandum of Conversation' for 'barbarian invasion' context in *FRUS*, v. 232; and *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*, ed. Robert H. Ferrell (New York, 1980), p. 16.

²⁴ Truman to Churchill, 13 April 1945, messages 1 and 2, MRM, reel 1, 0354-8: emphasis added.

both our names to be delivered personally by our ambassadors in reply to his messages to us. And if you agree that a joint message is desirable I hope you will "give accounts" so that we can without delay get it off to our ambassadors.' The message stated that the Lublin government was only to be considered as one of a number of groups to be 'consulted', rather than the foundation of a government to be made 'broader'.

This was a momentous departure from Roosevelt's last telegram to Churchill. According to the US ambassador at London, John Gilbert Winant, Churchill was most impressed, immediately shifting from worry about an unknown with 'little information and less power into supreme authority' to confidence: 'Everything we have learnt about him [Truman] since shows him to be a resolute and fearless man, capable of taking the greatest decisions.'

Harriman had another opportunity to influence policy by making the Anglo-American message to Stalin suggested by Truman conform to his own views. Although Harriman on 14 April sent Stettinius a long list of suggestions, Stettinius made no use or mention of them in his draft for Truman on the 15th. On the 16th, the joint message²⁵ was sent to Harriman (accompanied by a letter from Truman drafted by the state department) with instructions for its presentation to Stalin jointly with the British ambassador, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr. The message reflected none of Harriman's recommendations, and he tried to change it. He hinted that 'if it is believed to be desirable to send a joint message to Stalin at this moment', he should be the one to write it. Stettinius did not agree: the message 'had been approved by both the prime minister and the president ... Time does not, therefore, permit taking up the suggestions you raise.'²⁶

²⁵ The joint message contained a four-point proposal on the names of Polish leaders who should be brought together for consultation on forming a government. The first point included invitations to specific Polish leaders to come to Moscow for consultation. The issue involved which Polish leaders from within Poland would be invited, and which power would decide this. See Messages in *FRUS* v. 219-21. The Yalta accords had stated: 'The Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should therefore be reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad. This new Government should then be called the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity.' A commission made up of Molotov, Harriman, and Clark Kerr was 'to consult in the first instance in Moscow with members of the present Provisional Government and with other Polish democratic leaders from within Poland and from abroad, with a view to the reorganization of the present Government along the above lines'.

²⁶ See Harriman to Stettinius, 14 April, memo by Stettinius to Truman, 15 April, Truman to Harriman, 16 April, Harriman to Stettinius, 16 April, and Stettinius to Harriman, 16 April 1945,

But the struggle continued. Harriman left Moscow for Washington early on 17 April, leaving the embassy's chargé d'affaires, George Kennan, to continue the stalling despite Truman's instruction: 'If you are unable to see Marshal Stalin before your departure, you and the British ambassador should transmit the message to Marshal Stalin through the appropriate channels. In the event that Ambassadors Harriman and Clark Carr [*sic*] have departed the chargé d'affaires with his British colleague should address a joint communication to Marshal Stalin transmitting the message from the president and the prime minister.'

Kennan, however, cabled Stettinius on 17 April that, with Harriman and Molotov gone, 'the British chargé and I assume that the delivery of the message to Stalin is no longer of the same extreme urgency'. He reminded Stettinius of the pending Soviet-Polish pact setting up a new government in Poland, and of the Soviets' wish for the Warsaw Poles to attend the San Francisco conference. Kennan concluded: 'In the light of the above, the British chargé and I have agreed that in the absence of further instructions we will submit the message to the foreign office for transmission tomorrow' which 'will give our respective governments time to inform us should there be any necessity for a revision of our instructions'. So the message would be delivered on the 18th at the earliest.²⁷

Earlier, William Allen, a member of Anthony Eden's staff at the foreign office, had telephoned Charles Bohlen, Stettinius's secretary, in Washington on 16 April to say that he had received urgent telegrams from Clark Kerr and Harriman 'suggesting certain changes in the joint message'. Bohlen commented that the proposed changes 'would insure Stalin's refusal of the proposal and also expose us to the charge which he [Stalin] had previously made to President Roosevelt that we were attempting to interpret the Crimea [Yalta] decision in such a way as to eliminate the Lublin government'. But Allen insisted that Clark Kerr was 'against anything that looked like a concession and that Mr Eden shared his views'. The already harsh anti-Soviet line in the joint telegram was under attack for being too weak. Bohlen pointed out that the message had been approved by Eden, Churchill, and the war

in *FRUS*, v. 214, 218, 220, 224, and 225.

²⁷ Truman to Harriman, 16 April 1945, Kennan to Stettinius, 17 April 1945, and Bohlen Memo, 17 April 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 220, 226-8.

cabinet, and it was finally dated and delivered on 18 April. Comparing the original text with the one sent to the Soviet government reveals that no substantive change was made as a result of all the frenzied diplomatic activity. A minor mystery remains. The heading of the message records that it was sent jointly, but it was signed only by Truman.

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Deane had been calling for policy changes for more than five months, without results. In a letter to Roosevelt's chief of staff, General George C. Marshall, on 2 December 1944, he paid lip service to the established policy: 'Everyone will agree on the importance of collaboration with Russia – now and in the future [but] it won't be worth a hoot, however, unless it is based on mutual respect and made to work both ways ... when the Red Army was back on its heels, it was right for us to give them all possible assistance with no question asked ... the situation has changed, but our policy has not.' Clearly irked, Deane went on: 'Some will say that the Red Army has won the war for us. I can swallow all of this but the last two words.'

In his letter to Marshall, Deane proposed that aid should be given to the Soviets only *if* they requested it and if the United States believed that it was needed for victory. Otherwise, the United States should insist on a *quid pro quo* and if the Soviets were not timely in responding to US proposals, the United States should act unilaterally and inform the Soviets afterwards. In sum, the United States should 'stop pushing ourselves on them and make the Soviet authorities come to us. We should be friendly and cooperative when they do so.' Deane told Marshall that Harriman 'has seen this letter and concurs fully in the thoughts and recommendations and believes that they apply with equal force to political matters'. When Harriman was asked about the letter, however, he demurred, saying that it was difficult to give an accurate picture in such a short letter. He asked whether 'consideration is to be given to a change in our policy of dealing with the Soviet government', in which case he would want to 'express his views in greater detail'.

Marshall was dissuaded from sending the letter directly to Roosevelt by General Thomas T. Handy and the secretary of state, Cordell Hull, who suggested that 'it might prejudice the president against Deane and also embarrass Deane with Harriman'. Instead,

Deane's letter was forwarded to the secretary of war, Henry Stimson. Marshall's acting-secretary general staff, Colonel H. Merrill Pasco, who drafted the note for Stimson to sign and send to Roosevelt, suggested praising Deane's policy as 'splendid and sound'. Stimson removed the first adjective, but retained the second in his comment that it was 'an apt presentation with sound recommendations' before passing the letter on to Roosevelt on 3 January 1945. A great deal of caution and hesitancy had to be overcome to get the letter to Roosevelt at all but Roosevelt, then preparing for his summit meeting at Yalta with Stalin and Churchill, was hardly interested.²⁸

Deane tried again in his briefing paper for Yalta. In a memorandum headed 'Present Relations between the United States Military Mission, Moscow, and the Soviet Military Authorities', dated 22 January, he set forth the difficulties of doing business with the Russians: bureaucratic inertia, the need for each decision to be approved at the highest level, difficulty in contacting Soviet counterparts, and Soviet fear of exposure to western affluence. Thirty-four case histories, many of them of relatively minor incidents, were attached. Deane recommended 'the adoption of a *firm attitude in all of our dealings with the Soviet Union*, especially those in which we occupy a strong position [but] such an attitude of firmness can only succeed if it is adopted by *all agencies of our government* that have relations with officials of the Soviet Union'.²⁹

On 16 April, while Harriman was trying to toughen the joint Anglo-American message to Stalin, Deane submitted to the Joint Chiefs a memorandum on 'Revision of Policy with Relation to Russia', which became JCS 1313. His arguments were similar to the ones he had expressed to Marshall in December, but were now bolstered, expanded, and documented. He began by stating that 'following the invasion of Russia', the Americans and the British had had to 'prevent the disaster of a Soviet collapse'. The Allies had saved the Soviet Union from defeat and enabled 'her to inflict telling blows on the enemy', but success had caused serious problems: 'Not only have we a Russia that is victorious over the Germans, but one that is so sure

²⁸ Deane to Marshall, 2 Dec. 1944 and Stimson to Roosevelt, 3 Jan. 1945, in *FRUS: The Conferences of Malta and Yalta* (Washington, 1967), pp. 447-9. See also Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory, 1943-45* (New York, 1973), p. 530.

²⁹ 'Memorandum for the United States Chiefs of Staff', esp. 'Conclusions', JCS, part I, USSR, reel 2, 0183-236: emphasis added.

of her strength as to assume an attitude of dominance with respect to her allies.'

Early in the war, Deane conceded, 'we were dependent on Russia' on the Continent, but 'no one realized this better than the Russian leaders, and they have taken full advantage of the situation'. In our generosity, Soviet demands were 'honored wherever possible and without requiring supporting facts ... lest we give offense and bring on the bogey of a separate peace'. Deane had expected 'a program such as ours' to produce 'gratitude and friendship ... such has not proven to be the case'; owing to the Russians' distrust of foreigners, Americans included, 'every request or proposal that we make to the Soviet Union is viewed with suspicions. The Soviet mind can only look for the ulterior motive behind our liberality. They conclude that our co-operation springs from fear. As the Soviet strength has grown, their demands have increased and our generous response has continued ... As a result they do not respect us ... they do not trust us.'

Deane welcomed the 'firmness' and the 'firm stand' taken since the Yalta conference, for it would 'establish a more durable basis for our relations in the future'. The United States no longer needed the Soviets: 'military collaboration with the Soviet Union is not vital to the United States', and this was true in Asia as well as in Europe: 'I am certain ... that Soviet participation in the Far East is assured in furtherance of their own interests.' Therefore, the administration should 'wait for the Soviet authorities to come to us on matters which require collaboration ... only in this manner can we regain Soviet respect'.

Deane proposed that the United States should withdraw from all unessential joint projects with the Soviet Union and wait for a 'Soviet initiative with respect to collaboration'. If a project were of 'primary importance' to the United States, the Soviets should be asked to collaborate only if 'we are prepared, in case of an initial refusal ... to force Soviet co-operation'. Moreover, US representatives in Moscow should be left to decide how to handle 'desirable projects' of less importance. The United States should keep up the appearance of friendship and keep the Soviets informed but should not seek their advice or agreement. Deane added four 'first steps' to be taken immediately: the United States should refuse to set up an air base in

Budapest; 'abstain' from tactical air operations in support of Soviet ground troops; 'request' the Soviets to repair stranded US aircraft and to evacuate their crews; and 'abandon all efforts' to station US personnel in Russia unless 'essential'.³⁰

Deane submitted a supplement to 1313, which was treated as a separate document and became JCS 1313/1. Entitled 'Specific Action to Be Taken under Revised Policy with Russia', the thirty-five-page study, prepared in Moscow by the US Planning Group, provided statistical, logistical, and strategic evidence on two questions: the need for a US strategic air force in the Komsomolsk-Nikolaesvek area, and a Pacific convoy route to Eastern Siberia to help the Soviets in a war against Japan.

Deane recommended against the strategic air force, primarily because 'its successful accomplishment will depend on a high degree of Soviet "co-operation", which has hitherto not been experienced'. On the question of the convoy route, Deane's recommendation was more tentative. He thought the Soviets should be able to send enough supplies by way of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and even if this were destroyed by the Japanese, it would not hamper offensive operations for seven or eight months, for the Soviets could turn to the alternatives. 'It is probable that a Pacific supply route ... is not vital' though it would provide 'insurance against initial reverses and the prolongation of the war'.

Great emphasis was placed by Deane on the 'experience of the US embassy and the military mission in Russia', as only they really knew the history of 'consistent delays, evasions and outright disregard of their agreements on the part of the Russians'. 'Agreement to a project,' he argued, 'does not guarantee that the project will be carried out promptly or successfully. [In fact] it appears that it is not realistic to expect the necessary degree of co-operation from the Russians.'

Deane asked to be given authority to take decisions in Moscow. He attached to the memorandum the draft of a letter to be sent officially to himself in Moscow for delivery to the 'Red General Staff', cancelling the US strategic air force project. In the letter, the Pacific convoy route to Eastern Siberia was linked to the problem of lack of co-operation: 'Timing is a most important factor and unless timely

³⁰ 'Revision Of Policy with Relation to Russia', 16 April 1945, JCS, part I, USSR, reel 1, 0179-81 for the first five points, 'Recommendations', and 'First Steps', 0181-3.

plans and preparations can be made [it] will not be possible.' As the 'project is of primary interest to the USSR', the United States would give 'renewed consideration when requested to do so by the Red General Staff'.³¹

Deane was making the same arguments for a new policy to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as Harriman was making to the state department and the president. On 17 April the Joint Chiefs took the first step in the direction Deane and Harriman proposed. They accepted the four 'first steps' set out in JCS 1313 with only minor qualifications. Deane's other proposals (in JCS 1313 and 1313/1) awaited a review by the Joint Staff Planners and a later meeting of the Joint Chiefs.³² The result came on 23 April in JCS 1313/2.

* * *

Harriman's top-level talks with the diplomatic corps on his return to Washington began on 20 April, when he met with the secretary of state's staff committee and the under-secretary of state, Joseph C. Grew. The meeting gave Harriman the opportunity to propose policy changes to an audience he knew would welcome them. First, he said, the United States must insist that the Soviets abide by the Yalta agreement and by the Declaration on Liberated Europe, particularly regarding Poland. The United States must also oppose the Lublin government which 'could be kept effectively under Soviet domination' unless the 'old Polish leaders' made that difficult. As 'it seemed evident' that the Poles welcomed their old leaders, 'the Lublin group would be weakened'. Thus, Harriman recommended that the United States should claim publicly that it abided by the Yalta agreement in Poland while reinterpreting the agreement in practice.

The United States must aim at becoming the strongest post-war power, owing to the '*basic and irreconcilable difference of objective between the Soviet Union and the United States*'. The Soviet Union had an 'urge for its own security to see Soviet concepts extend[ed] to as large an area of the world as possible [establishing] friendly governments in bordering countries ... with Soviet assistance [and using] terroristic

³¹ 'Specific Action to Be Taken under Revised Policy with Russia' addressed the two additional clauses, *e* and *f*, of point 7 in JCS 1313. Also JCS 1313/1 in JCS, part I, USSR, reel 1, 0188, 0189, 0208, 0209, 0217, and 0195, 9-10, 28-9, 37-8.

³² See 'Decision on JCS 1313' in JCS, part I, USSR, reel 1, 0177. Compare Deane's request with JCS study of it: JCS 1313, 16 April 1945, 0181-3, with 1313/2, 23 April 1945, 0222-31. Additionally Admiral Chester W. Nimitz was consulted on JCS 1313/1.

confided to his memoirs that he 'favored going ahead without the Russians, if necessary'.

On the following day, the 21st, Harriman had a second meeting with the secretary of state's staff committee. Confident of Truman's agreement, he emphasized 'changes', particularly switching to western Europe as a 'first priority'. The United States must stop the Soviets: '*The extent to which the Soviets will go in all directions will depend on the extent of our pressure.*' The leverage available included lend-lease and credits, and getting 'control of all the activities of agencies dealing with the Soviet Union so that pressure can be put on or taken off' and, if necessary, dragging out talks, as 'this was the greatest element in our leverage'. The session ended with Harriman's re-emphasizing the assumption underlying the policy: '*If this government is resourceful and firm, it will be possible to check the Soviet Union to a degree.*'³⁴

Truman met on 22 April with Stettinius, Harriman, Bohlen, James C. Dunn, the assistant secretary of state, and Anthony Eden, in preparation for his first meeting with Molotov later in the day, and they decided that Molotov would not be greeted with military honours nor have a dinner held for him. Stettinius gave Truman the memorandum prepared for the meeting, containing three points: first, the United States would say it would carry out Roosevelt's policy of 'collaboration' and 'friendly relations' based on the principles agreed at Yalta; second, Truman hoped for 'a satisfactory solution' on Poland 'in accordance with the Crimean decisions'; and third, the United States, Great Britain, and China would co-operate on 'procedure' at the San Francisco conference.³⁵

Harriman was impressed with Truman's preparation. Stettinius had prepared a biographical sketch of Molotov to give Truman a sense of the man he would be dealing with. He rated him 'one of the ablest executives', but limited, for 'he has been abroad very little'. 'His outlook', therefore, differed from Soviet leaders 'who in some other manner have had considerable contacts with western European culture'. Molotov, however, had Stalin's confidence because 'he has always carried out Stalin's policies and instructions in a painstaking and effective manner'; most significantly, 'in carrying out negotiations he

³⁴ *FRUS*, v. 844-6 and Harriman and Able, *Special Envoy*, p. 450; emphasis added.

³⁵ Stettinius, 'Memorandum for President', 22 April 1945, 'Points to be Raised with Mr Molotov', P[ersonal] S[ecretary] F[iles] [Harry S.] Truman Library [Independence, Mo.], box 187.

has been noted for his frankness which sometimes amounts to bluntness ... [he] has the reputation of being less disinclined to make concessions than Stalin.' Noted for his own frankness, Truman could easily deal with a man best approached through 'bluntness' and 'frankness'.³⁶

Bohlen described the meeting between Truman and Molotov as 'merely an exchange of amenities, with no business discussed'.³⁷ When Truman brought up Poland, however, Molotov pointed out that Poland was on the Soviet border, its future had been decided at Yalta, and there would be agreement if the Soviet interpretation of the agreement were adopted. Truman, now sounding like Harriman, said the nature of the Polish government was the 'symbol of future development' and he would 'carry out to the full both the Dumbarton Oaks proposals and the Crimean decisions'. At this point, 'it became clear that the Moscow deadlock had simply been transferred to Washington.'³⁸

* * *

In two meetings of the Allied foreign ministers in Washington, Molotov was given the opportunity to prove the Soviets' willingness to co-operate by accepting the US interpretation of the Yalta agreement on the formation of a government in Poland. At the end of the meetings, Molotov commented that the United States 'did not wish to reorganize the Warsaw [Lublin] government but just wished to consider them as one of the groups to be consulted and that this was not in conformity with the Crimea decision'. Stettinius replied that Molotov 'was under the impression that the new Government of National Unity was just to be a continuation of the present Warsaw government', to which Molotov replied in turn that 'the new Polish government is to be set up on the basis of the Warsaw government with new groups taking part in it.' Stettinius warned Molotov that the San Francisco conference and 'the future of the new world organization' were in jeopardy but could be rescued if Molotov would give way. Stettinius pushed for a joint statement to show the world that the Allies held to 'collaboration', but Molotov would not agree

³⁶ 'Molotov, Biographical Sketch', 20 April 1945, PSF, Truman Library, box 187.

³⁷ Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969* (New York 1973), p. 213.

³⁸ State department, 'Memorandum of Conversation', 22 April 1945, PSF, Truman Library; Harry S Truman, *Year of Decisions: Memoirs* (New York, 1965), pp. 91-3; *FRUS*, v. 234-5; Bohlen, *Witness*, p. 213; and Harriman and Able, *Special Envoy*, p. 451.

unless the statement included a promise to consult the Warsaw Poles. Stettinius and Eden refused. There was deadlock.³⁹

On 23 April, Truman assembled his chief diplomatic and military advisers, including Harriman and Deane, to assess relations with the Soviet Union and to prepare himself for a final meeting with Molotov. Although this conference is well known, it is worth reviewing here, for it registered the consensus among the president and his senior diplomatic and military advisers that led to a shift in policy towards the Soviet Union.

Stettinius announced 'no improvement': the Yalta agreement on Poland had not been carried out, it had led to a 'complete deadlock'.⁴⁰ The Soviets wanted to keep the Lublin government and the United States to bypass it. Thus the United States made 'consultation with representative factions' the means by which Lublin would cease to be a government and become an outnumbered 'faction'. Stettinius had warned Molotov how 'seriously' the United States regarded this and how public confidence would be shaken 'by our failure to carry out the Crimean decision'. Truman added that he had told Molotov that he 'intended fully to carry out all the agreements reached by President Roosevelt at the Crimea'; however, 'our agreements with the Soviet Union so far had been a one way street and that could not continue; it was now or never.' He would continue with plans for the San Francisco conference and 'if the Russians did not wish to join us they could go to hell'.⁴¹

Truman next asked the views of those present. The secretary of war, Henry L. Stimson, expressed surprise: 'this whole difficulty with the Russians over Poland' was '*new* to him' and 'it was important to find out what the Russians were driving at'. Stimson's experience throughout the war, which had led him to conclude that the Soviets were reliable, had not prepared him for this change: 'in the big military matters the Soviet government had kept their word and ... the military authorities of the United States had come to count on it. In fact, he said that they had often been better than their promise.' It was 'important to find out what motives they had in mind in regard to these border countries' and perhaps to remember that 'their ideas of

³⁹ Minutes of second meeting regarding the Polish Question, 23 April 1945, *FRUS*, v. 241-51.

⁴⁰ Harriman and Able, *Special Envoy*, p. 45.

⁴¹ 'Memorandum of Meeting at the White House,' 23 April 1945, Bohlen notes, PSF, Truman Library, box 187.

independence and democracy in areas that they regard as vital to the Soviet Union are different from ours'. This view reflected the established policy of co-operation, of deferring to the Russians over Poland.

Stimson was not sanguine about the course Truman might be taking. 'We might be heading into very dangerous water ... without fully understanding how seriously the Russians took this Polish question'; after all, 'twenty-five years ago virtually all of Poland had been Russian'. Stimson wanted 'to know how far the Russian reaction to a strong [US] position on Poland would go'. Were 'the Russians perhaps were being more realistic than we were in regard to their own security?' 'We must understand that outside the United States with the exception of Great Britain there was no country that understood free elections ... the party in power always ran the election as he well knew from his experience in Nicaragua.' In his diary Stimson recorded: 'I ... told the President that I was very much troubled ... I said that in my opinion we ought to be very careful and see whether we couldn't get ironed out on the situation without getting into a head-on collision ... I ... pointed out that I believed in firmness on the minor matters where we had been yielding in the past and have said so frequently, but I said that this [Polish problem] was too big a question to take chances on and so it went on.'⁴²

The secretary of the navy, James Forrestal, followed Truman's lead: 'If the Russians were to be rigid in their attitude we had better have a show down with them now [rather] than later ... [Poland] could not be treated as an isolated incident.' There were 'many evidences of the Soviet desire to dominate adjacent countries and to disregard the wishes of her allies ... For some time the Russians had considered that we would not object if they took over all of Eastern Europe into their power.'

Harriman now broke in to refute Stimson, explaining that after returning from Yalta, Stalin and Molotov had been warned by the Lublin government of its 'shaky condition'; 'any genuine Polish leader ... would probably mean the elimination of the Soviet hand picked group'. The real issue, said Harriman, was 'whether we were to be a party to a program of Soviet domination of Poland ... a real break

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1-2; Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York, 1948), pp. 609-11.

with the Russians, [which] if properly handled ... might be avoided'. Although Harriman had been thinking of a break with the Soviets, Truman had explained during their first meeting that he was not ready to try to set up the United Nations without them. Now, when Harriman raised that prospect again, Truman broke in: he 'had no intention of delivering an ultimatum to Mr Molotov but merely to make clear the position of this government'.

William D. Leahy, chief of staff to both Roosevelt and Truman, who had accompanied Roosevelt to Yalta, agreed with Stimson. The Yalta agreement was 'susceptible to two interpretations', he suggested, and he had left Yalta 'with the impression that the Soviet government had no intention of permitting a free government ... it was a serious matter to break with the Russians but ... we should tell them that we stood for a free and independent Poland.' Stettinius, who disagreed, started to read parts of the Yalta agreement which 'was susceptible of only one interpretation'. Leahy did not respond, but instead let the debate play itself out, because 'the Joint Chiefs were about to change our military policy anyway on the basis of studies made in Moscow by General Deane'.⁴³

Marshall, also careful to distinguish political matters from military, said that he was 'not familiar with the Polish issue and its political aspects' but 'was inclined to agree with Mr Stimson that the possibility of a break with Russia was very serious'. From a military point of view, 'the situation in Europe was secure [but] ... hoped for Soviet participation in the war against Japan ... would be useful to us ... difficulties with the Russians such as in the case of *Crossword* [the Berne talks] usually straightened out'. Although he would shortly approve Deane's new policy on relations with the Soviets, Marshall still favoured the one established by Roosevelt.

Harriman quickly rose to the challenge: 'The Soviet Union had kept its big agreements on military matters [yet] those were decisions which it had already reached by itself [but] on other matters it was impossible to say they had lived up to their commitments. For example over a year ago they had agreed to start on preparations for collaboration in the Far Eastern war but that none of these had been carried out.' Then he turned to Deane for support and was promptly given it. 'The Soviet Union would enter the Pacific war as soon as it

⁴³ William D. Leahy, *I Was There* (New York, 1950), p. 351.

was able irrespective of what happened in other fields,' Deane explained; 'The Russian must do this because they could not afford too long a period of let down for their people who were tired.' Deane was 'convinced after his experiences in Moscow that if we were *afraid* of the Russians we would get nowhere, and he felt that we should be *firm when we were right*'.

Deane had the last word. Dismissing the military advisers, Truman said he 'had their point of view well in mind', but had not been dissuaded by them. The state department was jubilant at the turn of events, seeing Harriman laying down the new rules, Truman following them, and itself playing the part of alter ego that Hopkins had been for Roosevelt.⁴⁴

* * *

The Joint Chiefs then left for the meeting at which they would approve Deane's proposed policy and abandon Roosevelt's policy of co-operation. Yet as the advisers' meeting had shown, Stimson, Leahy, and Marshall, who were not told of the shift within the state department orchestrated by Harriman, still held the assumptions that had governed Roosevelt's policy: they did not see Poland or Eastern Europe as being in the US sphere of influence, and still saw a need for Soviet-US understanding. The commander-in-chief of the fleet and chief of naval operations, Admiral Ernest King, had been silenced by Truman when he attempted even to find out what was at issue. Leahy, however, knew exactly what was changing.

The Joint Staff Planners in JCS 1313/2 affirmed on 23 April that 'the policy recommended by General Deane in JCS 1313 is sound. To implement it, all projects involving Soviet collaboration should be reviewed as a first step towards cancellation of all projects not in harmony with the approved policy.' The JCS authorized the dispatch of Deane's letter to himself in Moscow which had recommended precisely these actions. Four major changes, to go into effect immediately, were almost exactly the ones Deane had proposed on the 16th:

That the military authorities of the United States withdraw from all projects involving military operations dependent on Soviet collaboration which are now in operation, under consideration, or proposed for the future and which

⁴⁴ 'Memorandum of Meeting at the White House', 23 April 1945, Bohlen notes, PSF, Truman Library, box 187: emphasis added.

do not make an essential contribution to the successful prosecution of the war;

That except for projects of primary importance to the United States in the prosecution of the war, we wait for Soviet initiative with respect to collaboration;

That with respect to projects of great importance to the United States which involve Soviet collaboration, our representatives in Moscow [will] be directed to approach the Soviet authorities only when we are prepared, in case of initial refusal, to take positive action to support our requests and our interests.

In this instance, the Joint Chiefs removed Deane's more hostile wording – which stated that, in the case of a Soviet refusal, the United States would take action 'to force Soviet co-operation'. Fourth, if projects were desirable, 'but not of vital primary importance to the United States', US representatives in Moscow were 'authorized to decide the time and manner of their approach to the Soviet authorities or to refrain from making such an approach when they know that the action proposed is counter to basic Soviet policy'.

Co-operation would be exchanged for the appearance of co-operation in order to disguise the beginning of a monumental shift in US policy. As Deane stated in JCS 1313 and the Joint Chiefs adopted in JCS 1313/2, 'US military authorities [should] meet Soviet requests for assistance or collaboration sympathetically and in a co-operative spirit.' But, although US officials were to 'keep the Soviet military authorities thoroughly informed', their 'comment on or concurrence in our actions' would not be asked for unless absolutely necessary. Courtesies would be observed while the United States acted unilaterally, in itself minimizing contact and reducing occasions for conflict. As Deane had planned, 'every effort [should] be made to avoid points of friction which might be the source of US-USSR animosity now or in the future.' In sum, Americans would share information but avoid entanglements; with the change to unilateralism, avoidance of friction would be both the goal and the result of withdrawal from most collaborative efforts.⁴⁵

Reconciling appearance with substance was especially difficult for the Joint Chiefs in this document because the JSSC still stood by its opposition to Deane. It explained that the 'maintenance of the unity

⁴⁵ JCS 1313/2, 23 April 1945, JCS, part I, USSR, reel 1, 0222-31: emphasis added. Compare JCS 1313, 16 April, 'Recommendations', 0181-2 with JCS 1313/2, 23 April (Appendix A), 0225.

of the Allies in the prosecution of the war must remain the cardinal and overriding objective of our political-military policy with Russia. Russian non-co-operation results generally from demands by the US which are not essential to the overall progress of the war, but which the Russians consider infringe on their fundamental national policy.' And the JSSC opposed 'retaliatory acts [which] on minor matters probably would do little good and should not be undertaken until more important differences are settled.' The Joint Staff Planners explained that the JSSC had studied 'various proposals which had been made involving retaliation for a series of incidents of Soviet non-co-operation ... we should then consider action on the "*quid pro quo*" basis as opposed to the principle of retaliation'. If retaliation, usually 'unwise', seemed appropriate on 'matters of importance', the decision should be taken in Washington, not by Deane in Moscow, and 'should be of a proper nature to force co-operation and not serve solely as an irritant'.⁴⁶

Despite their view that JSSC policy was 'generally sound' in its rejection of retaliation, the Joint Staff Planners also declared that 'the policy recommended by General Deane is sound' – both policies were 'sound'. But both had been modified as the result of changing co-operation policy. For the time being, 'retaliation' was 'unwise' and ruled out for Deane's use, but actions to restrain the Soviets could take place on a '*quid pro quo* basis'.

* * *

The 'Memorandum for the President' prepared by the state department for Truman to read to Molotov at their final meeting contained six points, and the 'Memorandum of Conversation' – notes taken by Bohlen that fateful late afternoon of 23 April – shows that Truman presented all six of them virtually verbatim.⁴⁷ After greeting Molotov, Truman expressed his regret that the Allied foreign ministers had failed to reach agreement about Poland. Molotov expressed the same regret. Truman then turned to his memorandum and began to state US policy. Four of the points he made bear repeating here.

The first three points concerned Poland. Truman claimed first that 'the proposals contained in our joint message' with Churchill of 18

⁴⁶ JCS 13132, *ibid.*, 0227-8.

⁴⁷ 'Memorandum for the President', 23 April 1945, PSF, Truman Library, box 187; compare with Bohlen notes, 'Memorandum of Conversation', 23 April 1945, *FRUS*, v. 256-8.

April 'are eminently fair and reasonable and we go as far as we can'. Second, he stated that the United States government could not 'agree to be a party to the formation of a Polish government which was not representative of all Polish democratic elements'. Third, he explained that the United States 'was deeply disappointed' that the Soviets were not consulting representative Polish leaders.⁴⁸

As a failure to execute the Yalta decisions 'with regard to Poland will cast serious doubt upon our unity of purpose in regard to post-war collaboration', Truman stated, fourth, that the United States was determined with 'other members of the United Nations to go ahead with plans for the world organization no matter what difficulties or differences may arise with regard to other matters'. Here was the threat of a united front hostile to the Soviets which Harriman had argued the Soviets would do whatever they could to prevent.

Truman next handed Molotov a message for Stalin that reiterated the arguments Stettinius and Eden had made in their talks with Molotov: 'There was an agreement at Yalta' and Roosevelt had agreed to 'reorganize the Provisional Government now functioning in Warsaw in order to establish a new Government of National Unity in Poland'. The agreed method was consultation between representatives of the Provisional Polish Government and other democratic leaders from Poland and abroad leading to 'establishment of a new Provisional Government of National Unity genuinely representative of the democratic elements of the Polish people'. The message ended by threatening that 'failure to go forward at this time with the implementation of the Crimean decision on Poland would seriously shake confidence in the unity' of the three allies, and shake 'their determination to continue to collaborate in the future as they have in the past'.⁴⁹

When Truman had finished, Molotov 'asked if he could make a few observations'. The Soviets 'wished to co-operate ... the basis of collaboration had been established', and they could 'find a common language' with which to settle differences. The three allies had 'dealt as equal parties and there had been no case where one or two of the three had attempted to impose their will on another'. A policy of co-

⁴⁸ *FRUS*, v. 256.

⁴⁹ Untitled, PSF, Truman Library, box 187; also published as 'For Information of Marshal Stalin', *Stalin's Correspondence*, pp. 218-19.

operation was 'the only one acceptable to the Soviet Government'. Truman replied with great firmness that agreement had been reached at Yalta, and it remained only for Stalin 'to carry it out in accordance with his word'. When Molotov added that 'he personally could not understand why if the three governments could reach an agreement' on Yugoslavia, they could not reach one on Poland, Truman again 'replied sharply that an agreement had been reached on Poland and that it only required carrying out by the Soviet government'.

Molotov stated that his government supported the Yalta agreements and he 'could not agree that an abrogation of those decisions by others could be considered as a violation by [the] Soviet government'. Poland, a neighbouring country, 'was of very great interest to the Soviet government'. Truman, in reply, promised to carry out 'loyally all the agreements reached at the Crimea' and insisted that the Soviets must do the same: 'The president said that he desired the friendship of the Soviet government, but that he felt it could only be on the basis of mutual observation of agreements *and not on the basis of a one way street*'.⁵⁰

There is no mention in the record that Truman said anything more. Yet myth has it that he berated Molotov and told him 'to go to hell'. This is not true. Truman may have used the term 'one way street', as he had used the words to his advisers earlier in the day to show how tough he intended to be. It is also unlikely that there was an exchange between Molotov and Truman in which Molotov said 'I have never been talked to like that in my life' and Truman replied 'Carry out your agreements, and you won't get talked to like that.' The Bohlen transcript records no such exchange. Most records confirm, however, that Truman did say to his advisers (in private) that if the Soviets did not wish 'to join us they could go to hell'.⁵¹

⁵⁰ 'Memorandum of Conversation', 23 April, PSF, Truman Library, box 187: emphasis added.

⁵¹ 'Memorandum of Meeting at the White House 2:00 p.m.', Bohlen notes, PSF, Truman Library, box 187. This has been noted elsewhere. William E. Pemberton, *Harry S. Truman: Fair Dealer and Cold Warrior* (Boston, 1989), p. 47, makes the same point: 'On 23 April just before he saw Molotov ... Truman said "they could go to hell"'. Truman records in his *Memoirs* that Molotov said, 'I have never been talked to like that in my life' and that he [Truman] said what is stated above. Pemberton states: 'This exchange, now part of the Truman folklore, was not included in Bohlen's transcript of the meeting, however, and Bohlen told journalist Robert J. Donovan it did not occur. Truman often described harsh verbal exchanges that in fact did not take place. Still it had been a blunt session:' see fn. 16 on p. 189 and cf. Truman, *Memoirs*, p. 99; Bohlen, *Witness*, p. 213; R. J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-9* (New York, 1977), p. 445, n. 33; and Harriman and Abel, *Special Envoy*, pp. 453-4.

Harriman had won. His views had become established US policy, to be demonstrated on Poland: two interpretations of the word 'democratic' were no longer accepted in the interests of Allied co-operation, and the demand for 'consultation' among three Polish groups, of which the Lublin government was only one, with the insistence on a representative government as the outcome, established a new litmus test to determine whether the United States would 'collaborate' and perhaps even 'co-operate' with the Soviet Union in future. Leahy was right in his comment at the White House advisers' meeting on 23 April. There *had* been 'two interpretations' of the Yalta agreement. The Soviets had not intended to set up 'a free government', nor had the United States expected them to. Roosevelt at Yalta had left Eastern Europe and Poland within the Soviet sphere of influence. But that was in February. By 23 April, Allied co-operation in the world war was coming to an end; cold war was beginning.

University of California, Berkeley